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Summary record of the 9th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday 14 October 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)
later: Mr. Petkus (Vice-Chairperson) ..... (Lithuania)
later: Mr. Al-Nasser ..... (Qatar)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*continued*) (A/C.4/64/L.5 and L.7)

Draft decision on the question of Gibraltar (A/C.4/64/L.5)

1. *Draft decision A/C.4/64/L.5 was adopted.*

Draft resolution on the question of Western Sahara (A/C.4/64/L.7)

2. *Draft resolution A/C.4/64/L.7 was adopted.*

3. **Mr. Loulichki** (Morocco), speaking in explanation of position on the draft resolution just adopted, welcomed the consensus reached, for the third consecutive year, in the Fourth Committee. It was the result of fraternal and fruitful agreement between the delegations of Morocco and Algeria and it reaffirmed the international community's unanimous support for the ongoing negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations. He expressed the hope that the spirit of compromise and cooperation that had led to the consensus would spark a more active engagement of all the parties at the resumption of the Manhasset talks. Such a change of attitude was bound to have a positive impact on bilateral relations and, ultimately, to give fresh impetus to the construction of the Arab Maghreb.

4. **Mr. Lidén** (Sweden), speaking in explanation of position on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Republic of Moldova, Norway and Ukraine, welcomed the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus and commended the parties for their efforts.

5. The European Union reaffirmed its full support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to achieve a political solution that would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. It welcomed the ongoing negotiations and the commitment of the parties to dialogue. However, it remained concerned about the implications of the conflict for security and cooperation in the region.

6. It welcomed the visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and encouraged the parties to collaborate with him in the implementation of the UNHCR confidence-building measures programme. In that regard, it welcomed the willingness of the parties to explore the establishment of family visits by land.

7. **Ms. Pedrós-Carretero** (Spain), referring to draft resolution VI, contained in document A/64/23 (chapter XII), said that Spain had joined the consensus thereon, and supported the application of the principle of self-determination to the Territories included in the omnibus resolution.

8. At the same time, it considered that the principle of self-determination was not the only relevant principle in carrying out the decolonization of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. There were cases, including Gibraltar, on which a specific decision had just been adopted by consensus, the principle of territorial integrity should be applied in accordance with various resolutions of the General Assembly.

9. In the decolonization of that Territory, Spain was keen to resume negotiations with the United Kingdom, in accordance with the mandate of the General Assembly, to find an agreed solution that took the interests of Gibraltar into account.

Agenda item 34: Questions relating to information (*continued*) (A/64/21 and A/64/262)

10. **Mr. Mori** (Japan) expressed appreciation to the Department of Public Information for its coverage of the priority issues dealt with by the United Nations such as climate change, the influenza A (H1N1) outbreak and gender equality and for the promotion of public information through the information centres around the world, including Tokyo. He also hailed the efforts to enhance the Department's effectiveness and rationalize the operations of United Nations information centres.

11. During the period covered by the report, the Secretary-General had visited Japan and had met high-level political leaders to discuss such global and regional issues as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, United Nations reform, including Security Council reform, disarmament and nuclear proliferation and cooperation to fight piracy. He had also met representatives of the private sector, students and academia, youth, leaders of opinion, the mass media and political parties and had emphasized the important

role that Japan and the United Nations played in tackling the world's problems.

12. Japan would strengthen its cooperation with the United Nations and would continue to support the Department.

13. **Mr. Walzer** (Israel) commended the Department for its efforts to promote Holocaust remembrance around the world. Together with civil society groups that worked with renowned institutions and experts in Holocaust and genocide studies, the Department was educating future generations on the dangers of hate, bigotry and anti-Semitism. He singled out the "Unlearning Intolerance" seminar series and the "Footprints for Hope" project, created to ensure that new generations learned the lessons of the Holocaust. It was inspiring that in addition to Holocaust commemoration, initiatives were undertaken to prevent similar atrocities anywhere in the future.

14. The Department's work on Holocaust awareness demonstrated inter alia the evolving educational role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century and constituted an inspiring example of cooperation between the United Nations and Israel. The Department's work to commemorate and learn from the Holocaust should be further supported by other Member States.

15. Under a long-standing Israeli initiative to educate the public on the principles and actions of the United Nations, his delegation renewed its invitation to the Department to open an information centre in his country to foster dialogue and cooperation in the region. Israel's unique status as a multilingual and multicultural democracy and as the birthplace of the world's three great monotheistic religions offered a unique opportunity for the Department.

16. As a young State that had attracted immigrants from many nations, Israel had great experience in cutting-edge technology and was eager to share it with the wider international community and with its immediate neighbours in particular in a bid to bridge the technological and digital divide.

17. However, his delegation was disappointed at the one-sided, biased and misleading picture of the facts on the ground in the Middle East put out by the special information programme on the question of Palestine. Until a more even-handed approach was adopted, Israeli Government officials would not participate in the seminars organized under the programme.

18. **Mr. Rodríguez** (Peru), reiterating his country's commitment to the freedom of expression and of the press, said that Peru condemned attacks on journalists in areas of conflict.

19. There was a need to focus efforts on establishing and consolidating a system of national information centres that would spread the Organization's message in a clear and coordinated manner. Since regional and national information centres were the means of keeping abreast with public opinion around the world, sufficient resources must be allocated to them to ensure they could perform efficiently and effectively. Peru supported the establishment of a strategic system to focus on information concerning global issues such as climate change, the global financial and economic crises and their impact on development, and the A (H1N1) influenza pandemic.

20. Welcoming the positive outcome of the strategic communications workshop for communications officers in Africa held in Abuja, he said that experience should be replicated in other regions, including his own, to promote coherence and efficiency and to exchange best practices and lessons learned.

21. The United Nations Information Centre in Lima had worked together with Government bodies, public and private institutions and universities to raise the public's awareness about global issues that affected the country. He commended the Department for its efforts to promote the participation of hundreds of young people from all over the world in Model United Nations conferences. Such events helped to shape the opinions of young citizens and enhance their awareness of the substantive issues addressed by the Organization.

22. He reiterated the importance of equal treatment for the official languages of the United Nations and called for News Centre articles and press releases on open meetings to be published not in the two working languages but in the six official languages.

23. **Ms. Ataeva** (Turkmenistan) said that the Department must provide timely and unbiased coverage of world events and called for more publicity for the Organization's conflict-prevention efforts, since quiet United Nations diplomacy remained largely unnoticed. She drew attention to the decision in 2007

to establish a United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia in Ashgabat. The Centre was already playing an active role in regional meetings at the highest level. Its efforts must be supported by the media.

24. She noted the productive work in Russian of the United Nations News Centre and its enormous value, especially to countries without journalists accredited to the Organization. Turkmenistan was grateful for the coverage by the Department of the General Assembly resolution, sponsored by Turkmenistan, on the reliable and stable transit of energy and its role in ensuring sustainable development and international cooperation.

25. **Ms. Millard-White** (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), commended the Department for its work and outreach to students, youth groups, non-governmental organizations and civil society on the various activities in which the Organization was engaged, including the eradication of poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights and HIV/AIDS, as well as for calling attention to and informing about the work of the United Nations on current issues such as the global economic and financial crisis, the energy and food crisis and climate change.

26. Since most of the CARICOM members were small island developing States vulnerable to climate change, they embraced the campaign to promote the successful outcome of the United Nations Climate Change Conference to be held in Copenhagen in December 2009.

27. Although the Internet was now a primary medium of communication, it should be borne in mind that, for the vast majority of peoples in the developing world, the traditional print and electronic media, including radio, remained the primary media for the transmission and receipt of information. CARICOM supported the continued production and broadcasting of daily news bulletins and monthly programmes on the activities of the United Nations, by means of radio stations in all the islands, including the Non-Self-Governing Territories. CARICOM also welcomed direct satellite and Internet distribution to broadcasters worldwide of the Department's materials and the Information Centre in Port of Spain availed itself of such resources for its e-transmissions.

28. However, CARICOM was concerned about the extent to which information on decolonization was disseminated to Non-Self-Governing Territories and would like appropriate measures to be taken to address the issue. The Department must report on the status of its Caribbean radio programmes and on the coverage and dissemination of television programmes on the region by United Nations Television.

29. The United Nations Information Centre for the Caribbean served 19 English- and Dutch-speaking Member States throughout the CARICOM subregion. Despite its wide geographic coverage of roughly 3 million square kilometres and a projected audience of 6.8 million people, it had only six staff members, who must be commended for spreading the United Nations story and building media partnerships.

30. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago continued to cover the rent of the Information Centre, allowing it to use its annual budget allocation from the United Nations to carry out its communications goals more effectively. In that regard, she reiterated the CARICOM call for the Department to expand its representation in the region through the assignment of national information officers to the Kingston and Bridgetown offices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to serve the Northern and Eastern Caribbean. Indeed, the allocation of both staff and financial resources to information centres in developing needed to be constantly reviewed and adequate resources should be made available to the Department if it was to effectively fulfil its responsibility in all developing countries.

31. *Mr. Petkus (Lithuania), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

32. **Mr. Martono** (Indonesia) said that the Department of Public Information should use its expertise and broad coverage to help combat prejudice and divisions among nations, peoples and religions. The universal right to freedom of expression should always be protected, but it should be used responsibly to encourage peace and tolerance. The Department could play a vital role in raising the awareness of the world's mass media about the need to combat and eradicate the practice of stereotyping in the media.

33. He called on the Department to continue implementing its special information programme on the question of Palestine. The plight of the Palestinian people, under occupation and siege in violation of the norms of international law, should be publicized to raise global awareness. To that end, in June 2009,

Indonesia had hosted the United Nations Asian and Pacific Meeting on the Question of Palestine followed by the United Nations Public Forum in Support of Palestinian People.

34. As a troop-contributing country, Indonesia recognized the importance of using the media to promote peacekeeping and welcomed the growing cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations, Field Support and Political Affairs.

35. The efforts to disseminate information using as many channels of communication as possible, including the new social media, as well as in languages other than the six official languages of the United Nations, in order to reach the widest spectrum of audiences, was an excellent development. Nevertheless, information material on the programmes of the United Nations would be more widely disseminated and accepted if there was more local involvement and content in its production. That could be achieved by enlisting the assistance of the United Nations information centres, which played a crucial role, particularly in developing countries, in enhancing the Organization's public image so as to bolster international support.

36. **Mr. Badji** (Senegal) said that his delegation wished to highlight the central role played by the network of United Nations information centres in enhancing the public image of the Organization and in disseminating its message to local populations. The information centres, which contributed significantly to information sharing among the different communities and thus permitted the local populations to learn about the Organization's ideals, should therefore be provided with sufficient resources to fulfil their mission. Accordingly, Senegal had donated the premises occupied by the United Nations information centre in Dakar.

37. Despite the difficulties it faced, the Department continued its effort to disseminate information on the work and decisions of the General Assembly and other organs of the Organization in all the official languages of the United Nations; its work in that area should be strengthened in order to promote multilingualism in all of the Organization's activities. Furthermore, the Department of Public Information had provided excellent support to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support in developing communication strategies that would provide accurate information on new peacekeeping activities and many other priority areas of the two departments. He also welcomed the innovative dynamic partnerships that the Department had established inter alia with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), students, international celebrities, the private sector and universities.

38. In that regard, he hoped that the Department would conclude agreements similar to those it had concluded with Chinese, Spanish and Russian universities for provision of translations free of charge and for translations into the other official languages of the United Nations, since it should make every effort to close the growing gap between the number of web pages created in English and those added in the other languages.

39. He welcomed the Department's special information programme on the question of Palestine and urged it to continue paying special attention to developments in that regard. It should also continue to offer its cooperation and support to Palestinian civil society organizations and to mobilize the solidarity and support of the international community for the Palestinian people with a view to promoting the exercise of their inalienable right to live in a free, independent and viable State. He accordingly urged all delegations to support the recommendations and decisions relating to the Department's information programme on the question of Palestine.

40. Senegal firmly supported the conclusions contained in the report of the Committee on Information and called for the traditional consensus on the relevant draft resolution in order to provide guidance to the Department in its work. The Department should not only comply with the recommendations of the States Members contained in the report but should also take note of the concerns expressed by delegations during the Committee's deliberations. Lastly, there was an urgent need to promote increased access to information technology by the populations of the South. As part of that effort, the Department should make more broadly known the Digital Solidarity Fund, which was an essential tool for narrowing the digital divide between the North and the South.

41. *Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) resumed the Chair.*

42. **Mr. Cato** (Philippines) commended the staff of the Department for their role as the public voice of the United Nations. The Department had been successful in attracting public attention to key development issues and in raising awareness of recent events such as the global economic crisis and the influenza A (H1N1) pandemic. While he welcomed the significant strides the Department had made to meet the challenges arising from the rapidly changing media environment, by complementing its outreach efforts in print, radio and television with the use of the new electronic media, it should remember the needs of developing countries, especially those without easy access to the new technologies.

43. Although he welcomed the Department's efforts to promote dialogue among civilizations, he lamented its lack of support for interfaith dialogue and cooperation for peace. In that regard, he drew its attention to the establishment by the General Assembly of a unit within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as a focal point in the United Nations Secretariat for inter-religious and intercultural matters.

44. In the area of peacekeeping, the Department had been instrumental in painting a positive image of the United Nations peacekeepers not only in the host countries, but also in the rest of the world. As president-elect of the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, the Philippines hoped to work with the Department to promote greater public awareness of the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation. The Philippines had put in place its own communications strategy on those issues using local celebrities to lead its campaign; it also planned to use the new social media to generate increased public awareness of the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction.

45. **Mr. Chabi** (Morocco) welcomed the progress achieved by the Department, especially with respect to broadening its audience and communicating the Organization's message in areas of priority concern to the international community, such as peacekeeping, climate change and sustainable development. A new information era was dawning, with new methods for gathering, processing and disseminating information. In the knowledge-based society, information had become even more valuable, if ephemeral. His delegation was encouraged that the Department had recognized the changing environment and was positioning itself as an interface between the United Nations and the public interested in knowing about the Organization's activities.

46. In that regard, the 63 United Nations information centres played a key role in the Department's activities in the field. For example, in March 2009, on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of peacekeeping, the information centre in Rabat had organized a seminar on Morocco's contributions to peacekeeping operations, and it maintained productive partnerships with several Moroccan universities on current issues, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and climate change.

47. While commending the Department's staff, his delegation wished to underscore that they must carry out their duties in accordance with the strictest ethical standards and without any bias. He commended the Department for its continuing attention to the special programme on the question of Palestine.

48. Multilingualism was vital to the work of the United Nations; nevertheless, the linguistic parity frequently demanded by the Member States was not yet a reality. His delegation hoped that the Department would redouble its efforts in that regard. The Department should play a more vigorous role in promoting dialogue among religions and civilizations.

49. Noting the efforts to establish guidelines and standardized operating procedures for communications in times of crisis, he said that the Department's special mission meant that it had to resort increasingly to new information and communications technologies. He accordingly hailed the effort to make the web page of the United Nations more user-friendly. However, it was encouraging to note that, while looking towards the future, the Department had not forgotten the past. As an African State, Morocco commended the Department for the organization of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

50. **Mr. Starčević** (Serbia), recalling his 14 years of experience as a former staff member of the Department of Public Information, including nine years as Director of the United Nations information centre in Delhi, said that the report of the Secretary-General showed how much the Department had accomplished in the first half of the year to highlight burning issues, particularly through the activities of its information centres.

51. He believed deeply in the importance and value of information centres and had witnessed the greatest damage done to the Organization since its inception: the closure of most of the information centres in Europe in the name of rationalization, despite the fact that the sudden closure had created such monumental expenses and loss of United Nations property that it would have been much cheaper to have let them continue to exist. Having a United Nations information centre within a country was a sign of distinction, like having a United Nations embassy, and he would never understand how the respective host Member States had accepted their closure without a murmur.

52. Apparently the decision had been largely based on a theory that the centres were important for developing countries, but not for developed ones. In fact, they were important for both, for different reasons. They helped respond to the special needs and requirements of developing countries in the field of information and communications technology for an effective flow of information, in addition to enhancing the public image of the United Nations and disseminating its message to local populations. In developed countries, it was the latter tasks that were the most important especially since support for the United Nations occasionally waned in the developed world.

53. The doctrine of "hubs" had been offered to make the decision more palatable; all of Europe would be covered by the information centre in Brussels. However, without a continuous presence in the country there could be no efficient information work; otherwise, the needs of the entire world could be covered by the United Nations Headquarters alone.

54. However, the solution to not increasing and perhaps even reducing the costs of maintaining a network of information centres existed: system-wide coherence and pooled resources. The centres could respond to the information needs of all the United Nations agencies present in a country and they routinely did so. Hence, there was no justification for each agency to have its own information officer; instead, part of the cost of maintaining such officers should go towards the costs of maintaining an information centre.

55. Lastly, he suggested that the Committee should revive the practice of inviting directors of information centres to a meeting so that they could present their achievements and results and answer any questions the delegations might wish to raise.

56. **Mr. Mana** (Cameroon), highlighting the central role played by the United Nations in world affairs, said that it was important for the Department of Public Information to continue to disseminate information on the issues that concerned all the countries of the world. Since the current main concerns of the international community were the global financial crisis and climate change, the Department should emphasize those issues. Indeed, developing countries continued to be affected by the recession, which was making it even more difficult for them to achieve the MDGs. Furthermore, such countries suffered more than the developed world from climate change, even though they bore less responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions. The Department should continue to provide information to the international media about the problems and expectations of those countries. Africa should benefit from sustained attention in that regard.

57. Although significant strides in information and communications technologies had brought peoples and cultures closer together, the print media and radio broadcasting were still necessary. The new technologies operated on electricity, yet Africa was affected more than other regions by the global energy crisis.

58. The Department should continue to disseminate the values of peace among and within Member States. In that regard, the role of the information centres was vital and they should be given the necessary resources to increase the effectiveness of their actions in the field. In addition, the Department should continue working towards cultural diversity and multilingualism.

59. His delegation endorsed the main recommendations of the report of the Secretary General on progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society outcomes at the regional and international levels (A/64/64-E/2009/10) in order to build a people-centred development-oriented and inclusive information society. It also welcomed efforts made by the African regional organizations with the support of the Economic Commission for Africa, which had led to the adoption by the Central African States of a regulatory framework for information and communication technologies, especially with regard to electronic crime and the protection of personal information.

60. The General Assembly's recognition of the role of information and communication technologies as a catalyst for the achievement of the MDGs and their application in the field of health care was very welcome. Furthermore, Cameroon appreciated the support provided by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to numerous distance education initiatives and looked forward to the implementation of an initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) designed to strengthen the role of the new technologies in agriculture and food security.

61. **Mr. Alzaabi** (United Arab Emirates) said that recent unfavourable global challenges such as the financial, economic and food crises, and the spread of the A (H1N1) pandemic, together with other challenges arising out of climate change and its implications for world security, peace and stability made it all the more important for the United Nations system to disseminate accurate and comprehensive information on those matters, and to promote awareness of their implications among the international community.

62. His delegation believed that it was particularly important to ensure the free and balanced flow of information and to avoid using information to exert cultural or ideological pressure. He renewed his delegation's call for the development of an international code of ethics that would help to establish appropriate legal and moral standards, clarify the responsibilities of governments and mass media organizations and ensure accuracy, objectivity, transparency and credibility in the transfer and use of information, respect for religious beliefs and cultural diversity and the rejection of fanaticism and racial and ethnic discrimination in accordance with the Charter, as well as ensure the well-being, safety and freedom of movement of information workers, especially in areas of conflict and tension.

63. It was also vital to bridge the digital divide in information and communications technology between developed and developing countries. In that context the United Nations should redouble its efforts to provide support for its programmes and information centres in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, as well as providing, in cooperation with the developed countries and donors, technical assistance to the media organizations of such countries including training for information workers to enable them to keep pace with worldwide developments in their field.

64. It was also necessary to provide financial and technical resources and to ensure that they were equitably allocated to information and translation units, in particular those working in the Arabic language, to ensure the principle of equitable treatment of all the six official languages of the United Nations in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly in order to ensure the translation of all the databases on the United Nations website as well as all United Nations resolutions and documents, verbatim records and the texts of international conventions and treaties. He also called for the increased use of the Arabic language in radio and television broadcasting as well as on the websites of the specialized agencies.

65. Every effort should be made to ensure that the standard of the services provided by the Department of Public Information was maintained during the refurbishment of the Headquarters premises. Furthermore, iSeek, the Secretariat's intranet site, should be made accessible to all delegations and to the permanent missions of Member States.

66. The Department should continue its efforts to publicize all aspects of developments in Palestine, particularly the ever increasing suffering of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation, as a result of which many innocent people were killed daily and their property confiscated and destroyed in flagrant violation of the principles of international law. In that context, he called for continued support for the annual training programme for Palestinian journalists at United Nations Headquarters.

67. His Government believed that it was desirable for its citizens to keep abreast of regional and international affairs and had therefore adopted legislation protecting intellectual property and facilitating the access of its national media organizations, including those in the private sector, to the most up to date means of communication so that they could conduct their broadcasting activities more effectively in the service of society and gain better access to other civilizations and cultures while ensuring that the purity of the values, principles and traditions of the Islamic faith were preserved.

68. In line with its policy of openness to the outside world, his country had continued to adopt a series of bilateral conventions and memorandums of understanding on information and culture, including some with the United Nations, and to strengthen its

participation in regional and international information-related conferences, symposiums, exhibitions and projects so as to be involved in worldwide developments and to participate more effectively in supporting development programmes and plans in the field of information, including programmes to assist developing countries and countries that had suffered from conflict and natural disasters.

69. In conclusion, he hoped that the Committee's discussion of the item would be conducive to further international cooperation in the field of information and would open up channels of communication between peoples, contribute to transparency, fairness and impartiality and promote a culture of peace, tolerance and dialogue between civilizations for the benefit of future generations.

70. **Mr. Valero Briceño** (Venezuela) expressed appreciation for the work of the Department of Public Information, especially during the plenary debate of the Assembly each year. The United Nations strategies for the dissemination of information should take into account the needs and circumstances of all countries. His delegation believed that it was vitally important to overcome the disparities in information and communication technologies between developing and developed countries and that all countries should have equal access to the new technologies.

71. A regional television station, Telesur, had been established by his country and other South American countries to help to overcome the news gap between the North and South. It promoted a new vision that reflected the actual situation in the developing world, especially in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. It was an expression of solidarity and cooperation among countries and peoples and defended the right to sovereignty and self-determination of the people, especially the Palestinians' right to self-determination. Furthermore, Telesur represented an alternative to the vast communications monopolies that promoted the interests of the national and international elite.

72. However, Telesur faced many challenges. Its signal was restricted by the cable television companies controlled by the communications monopolies and its journalists were often attacked. Indeed, a systematic campaign was being waged against Telesur by the powerful media companies in collusion with some of the private media in his country. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela attached great importance to freedom of thought and expression, which was embodied in the Constitution, but it was witnessing a new type of terrorism: media terrorism. The 2002 coup d'état against President Hugo Chavez had been promoted by the owners of the major national media.

73. The Venezuelan Parliament had enacted new telecommunications legislation, which guaranteed access to communications and information to all Venezuelans and encouraged the involvement of the society at large in the management of sources of information. The country was building up a democratic and participatory information and communications system. The new media, with a social and humanistic content, were helping to raise the awareness and the intellectual, cultural and education levels of the people.

74. **Mr. Vidal** (Uruguay) said that in 2008, Uruguay had informed the Committee about the implementation of a Government-funded countrywide innovative initiative entitled the "Ceibal Plan", the first time that the "One Laptop per Child" project of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was being implemented. Under the plan, every pupil and every teacher in the country's public schools, from the first through sixth grades, had received a laptop computer: a total of 380,000 units. The main objective was to foster innovative use of computers within the classroom, provide technical support and teacher training, develop relevant content, form learning communities, and foster the participation of families and society at large.

75. Through the public school students, the programme sought to facilitate computerized information and networking between students and their homes, and between teachers and schools, in order to promote digital inclusion and reduce the gap with respect to other countries and among its own citizens, while facilitating better access to education and culture. The programme included children with motor, visual or intellectual disabilities, who received machines specially designed for their needs. Private schools could join the programme if they wished, acquiring the laptops at a low cost.

76. Thanks to the initiative, there was a profound change in teaching and learning that was generating equal opportunities, beginning from childhood, for access to the information and knowledge essential to achieving a more inclusive and egalitarian society. He therefore called for international cooperation to

promote access to information technologies in the less developed countries and social sectors.

77. **Mr. Kanaan** (Observer for Palestine) said that, as demonstrated by General Assembly resolution 63/28, the special information programme on the question of Palestine enjoyed considerable support and was effective in increasing the awareness of the Palestinian problem among the international community. The programme fostered a climate that was conducive to dialogue and supportive of the peace process and the ending of the Israeli occupation so as to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and to establish their own independent State with Jerusalem as its capital and to find a just solution to the problem of Palestinian refugees in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

78. He expressed his gratitude to Member States for their support of the special information programme on the question of Palestine. The work of the Department in organizing annual international seminars on the question of Palestine and peace in the Middle East, the most recent of which had been held in Rio de Janeiro in July 2009, was much appreciated. He suggested that the Department should consider holding such events twice a year in future and expressed the hope that exhibitions similar to the permanent exhibition on Palestine at United Nations Headquarters would be arranged at the Offices of the Organization in Geneva and Vienna.

79. It was important to continue the Department's training programmes for Palestinian broadcasters, journalists and information specialists. Their participation in those programmes was particularly important despite the obstacles imposed by Israel as the occupying Power and the unjust blockade imposed on the territory of Palestine, particularly in the Gaza Strip. At a time when the importance of the role of information in promoting dialogue between the Palestinian and Israeli sides was under discussion, and when international efforts were being made to revive the peace process and reach a peaceful and just settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Israel was continuing its illegal and inhumane activities against the Palestinian people, including Palestinian journalists.

80. That had been particularly evident during the barbaric war launched by Israel against Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip in which 1,400 Palestinians had been killed, including five journalists. Israel was continuing its repressive campaign to suppress freedom of speech and of opinion and to conceal the truth. Despite the fact that international humanitarian law afforded protection to journalists even during military operations, Israel continued to target Palestinian journalists who were working tirelessly to cover events in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, subjecting them to barbaric ill-treatment. Similar treatment was meted out to foreign journalists who had been covering developments in the Palestinian homeland in order to drive them away from the scene of events, especially in occupied East Jerusalem, so that they would be unable to report to the outside world about what was happening to the Palestinian people.

81. Israel's practices were a flagrant breach of international law and custom relating to individual and journalistic rights. He called on the international news media and on associations of journalists to publicize the inhumane and illegal Israeli occupation and to exert pressure on Israel by all available means to desist from such practices and to enable Palestinian journalists and the foreign newspaper correspondents to report on events in Palestine.

82. The report of the United Nations fact-finding mission in Gaza, known as the Goldstone report, which had concluded that Israel had committed war crimes, crimes against humanity and grave violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law, deserved to be given wide international publicity.

83. Because of the continuing Israeli occupation, the Palestinian people had been deprived of access to modern communications services and information technology and no development could take place until the ending of the Israeli occupation, including the occupation of East Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan, the Shab'a farms and other Lebanese territories that Israel continued to occupy, and the establishment of a lasting, just and comprehensive peace bringing security and stability so that all people in the region could exercise their legitimate rights, including their right to information and the means of communication, and could take their place in the world economy and have opportunities for employment so as to eradicate poverty and ensure that future generations could live in peace and prosperity.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.